

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

COUNTRY	USSR (Latvian SSR)	REPORT NO.	<input type="text"/> 25X1A
SUBJECT	Conditions in Talsi, Mersrags, and Upesgriva	DATE DISTR.	7 August 1953
DATE OF INFO.	1948 - 1951	NO. OF PAGES	3
PLACE ACQUIRED	<input type="text"/> 25X1A	REFERENCE NO.	RD
		REFERENCES	

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

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SOURCE:

1. In the winter of 1949-50 partisans robbed stores in many communities on the east coast of Kurzeme. The store in Valgaciems (N57-24, E22-58) was said to have been robbed three or four times; the store in Berzciems was robbed three times. In Roja (N57-30, E22-49) the fishing artel storehouse was robbed, and among other items stolen were rubber boots. Other places, too, were robbed in the winter of 1950-51. This same winter the farmer who collected the milk quota from each farm was robbed three times between Upesgriva (N57-23, E23-00) and Kaltene (N57-28, E22-54). The robberies occurred in the morning between 0400 and 0500. Twice the collectors were found dead. The third time a woman was the collector, and she was robbed but not otherwise molested. This woman didn't talk about her experience or about the identity of the robbers. The store in Mersrags (N57-21, E23-07) was also robbed this winter. The partisans took mostly clothes, dry goods, and sugar. Usually these men traveled by truck, loaded the loot onto the truck, and disappeared into the forest. Occasionally they traveled on foot. As the partisans shot some of the people who got in their way, the Latvians thought they were not real partisans but rather Soviet bandits. It was also said that the Latvian partisans knew very well in which houses the Communists lived and in which houses the non-Communists, and although the source could not cite specific instances it was generally believed that the Latvian partisans robbed not stores but private Communist homes. The Latvian partisans were believed to be supported by the population and therefore would not have had to resort to robbery. In two cases, one in the winter of 1949-50, one in the winter of 1950-51, the MVD captured Latvian partisans in the woods. The source heard of the first instance; the second she knew of more directly because she heard shots and saw blood in the woods later. In the 1949-50 instance, the Soviets found a bunker in the woods between Talsi (N57-15, E22-35) and Lauciena (N57-14, E22-49), where the woods were very thick; there they captured about 30 partisans while they were eating. In the winter of 1950-51, shortly before Christmas, in the woods near Vandzene (N57-20, E22-48), the Soviets discovered and captured a partisan group.

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- and liquidated a partisan group of about 11 persons, one of whom was a woman. The Soviets attacked the partisans as they were going from the woods to a house on the edge of the woods; source thought probably someone who knew of their plans to visit this house had alerted the Soviets. In this fight three or four MVD men and two or three partisans were killed. The fight could be heard as far away as Upesgriva. Six partisans were later sentenced to life imprisonment in Siberia.
2. Not far from the Talsi station was a restaurant two stories high which was built in 1950 in the place of a house which had burned down. On the lower floor was a dining room, while upstairs there was a dining room and a dance hall, where music could be heard on Saturdays. Source ate lunch there once in 1950 and had three courses: soup, main dish, consisting of a pork chop, and dessert, for ten rubles. One dish of soup cost 1.20 rubles. There were both waiters and waitresses. Tips could be given or not, according to personal preference.
 3. On Liela iela was a four-story building, on the right side of the street as one came from the railroad station, not far from the police station, now the rayon military station. In this building was a Culture Club; various Communist activities were held here. On the first floor was a large hall where dances were held every Saturday, costing 2 rubles. There were two iebraucamas vietas in Talsi, one near the railroad station, on the main street, the other behind the church opposite the railroad station.
 4. In Mersrags, as compared with Upesgriva, source found many Communists. There was also a gypsy family in Mersrags. They were older people, and did not work, but begged, told fortunes, and stole. The gypsies got along well with the Soviets, who never seemed to bother them. About 30 to 40 Soviet soldiers lived in Mersrags in one of the houses from which a family had been deported. This house lay in the middle of the village between the Baptist church and the bridge. The soldiers had the usual gray-brown uniforms, gray caps with a red band, and red shoulderboards.
 5. In Mersrags the lighthouse was still in the same place and was in operation. The signals were in various color combinations. There were red, green, and white and red, and blue alone. Many times there were no signals. What it all meant source does not know. He saw these signals usually between 2400 and 0130. They were in operation at other times, but source does not know when. In Mersrags there were two churches, both of which were open. One of these, the Lutheran church, was near the beach, about one kilometer from the lighthouse; the other, the Baptist church, was in the town itself, about halfway between the Lutheran church and the railroad station. At the end of the two moles were two signals, one on each mole, with red lights. On the north side of the bridge, on the beach, a cannery was being built. It was a long, white building which was begun in 1949, yet by May 1951 was as yet unfinished. In Mersrags there were also a store and a pharmacy.
 6. It was forbidden to walk closer than 100 meters to the lighthouse. A Latvian woman had her house within this 100 meter limit and was sentenced to 25 years in Siberia because she had given a place to stay to a German woman. The reason for this was that she had taken the German woman within the forbidden limit and it was believed that she might also take partisans there. This woman had worked as a cleaning woman in the lighthouse, but after this time only Soviet sailors worked in the lighthouse. It was also forbidden to walk along the coast, although source did not know exactly how far the limit extended. In practice everyone did walk along the coast, anyway.

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7. A narrow-gauge railroad operated from Mersrags to Stende (N57-11, E22-28) by way of Talsi, with trains running once a day. The train left Mersrags at 0200 and arrived in Stende at 0900. From Stende it left at 2100, and arrived in Mersrags at 0100. The price of a ticket from Mersrags to Stende was 12 rubles. Since the train from Riga to Stende arrived at 0100, anyone changing for Mersrags had to wait 20 hours. For this reason, source and others took the freight trains. These usually leave Stende at 0300. From Stende to Mersrags the cars of the freight train were usually empty, and the train didn't usually make any stops between Stende and Mersrags. From Mersrags to Stende the cars were full of lumber, and in Stende they were coupled onto a train for Riga, part of the main Ventspils-Riga line. There were no conductors on these freight trains, only the crew. On the passenger trains from Stende to Mersrags not every car had a special conductor, but the train as a whole had one conductor and one ticket controller. The cars were not made in such a way that one could go from one to the other, and so at each station the controller could change cars and while the train was in motion complete the control of one car only, until the next stop. For this reason it was easy to travel without a ticket. The places were not numbered on this line, and one did not need a seat reservation.
8. All people over 60 years old in Upesgriva received a pension of 130 rubles per month. The Executive Committee of Upesgriva paid this amount. The Executive Committee was located at Ugunsgrava. Source asserts that all invalids, even war invalids who fought in the German army, e.g., Latvian legionnaires, received the same amount. The father of source's child had to serve with the Soviet Army in 1950, and during his service she received 50 rubles per month as support for the child. This money source received promptly every month on the 30th at the Executive Committee. This amount was paid to each woman when the father of her child was taken to the army. Source supposes 50 rubles was paid only for the first child; the next ones received less.

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